



MONTHLY NOTICES

OF THE

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY.

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No. 2.

J. R. HIND, Esq., F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

Edwin Simpson-Baikie, Esq., F.L.S., F.R.G.S., 21 York Terrace, Regent's Park, and United University Club, Pall Mall East; and

Colonel Henry T. Rogers, R.E., Superintendent of Survey, Madras, 24 Bassett Road, Notting Hill, W.:

were balloted for and duly elected Fellows of the Society.

Plan for telegraphing Astronomical Discoveries.

(From a letter of B. A. Gould to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1880, Nov. 8 [with slight and unimportant modifications]).

(Communicated by the President.)

I inclose the German astronomers' plan for telegraphing the discovery of Comets, Asteroids, &c., across the Atlantic. American observers are affected by it only as concerns the intelligibility of messages *received* by you. The Europeans seem of accord that they can receive most intelligibly messages sent in this way.

If you approve and adopt, please let me know at your early convenience, that the matter may be decided at once.

1. Only one despatch to be sent at a time. This, if for Europe, to be addressed to Prof. Krueger, at the Observatory in Kiel; if for America, to Prof. Baird, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. A second telegram to be sent as soon as a second observation has been obtained. Thus only two despatches in all.

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2. All numerical data to be expressed by a word for each figure, without regard to its value as dependent upon position. Thus 58 to be telegraphed as "five-eight," 12 as "one-two," 30 as "three-zero," &c.

3. All places which would ordinarily be left vacant, when the number is written in figures must be filled up by the word "nought," or "zero." Thus for R. A. = $1^h 5^m \cdot 3$ would be written "zero-one-zero-five-three," or for $19^h 3^m$ the despatch would be sent "one-nine-zero-three-zero" (the tenths of minutes being given for Right Ascensions, but not for other data, as by § 5).

4. The time of observation to be given in round hours of Greenwich mean time, preceded by day and month, and never in any other way. Thus an observation made on Oct. 12 at 13^h Greenwich mean time would be announced "One-two-October-one-three;" or if on Nov. 3 at $7^h 15^m$ Greenwich mean time, as "Three-November-zero-seven." In this way the time of observation, which should be given first of all, will be expressed by the name of the month preceded by one or two words, and followed always by two.

5. Right Ascension to follow the time of observation, and to be given by five words, expressing hours, minutes, and tenths of minutes in time, preceded by the word "ascension."

6. Declinations to be given by four words, expressing degrees and minutes, preceded by the word "North" or "South."

7. Daily motion in R. A. to be given in minutes and tenths of minutes of time, preceded by the word "plus" or "minus."

8. Daily Motion in Decl. to be given in minutes of arc, preceded by the word "North" or "South."

9. Magnitude, if given, to be preceded by the word "mag.," but expressed as an ordinal number.

Thus, in ordinary cases, the essential data will be comprised in twenty-three words, or twenty-five if the magnitude be given.

Example:—

Comet discovered by Swift Oct. 12. Place at 7^h Greenwich mean time R. A. = $2^h 23^m \cdot 7$, Decl. = $+31^\circ 2'$. Daily motion in R. A. $1^m \cdot 2$ decreasing; in Decl. $8'$ northward.

The despatch would be:—

comet swift one two october zero seven ascension zero two two three seven north three one zero two minus one two north eight.

Prof. Krueger (appointed editor of the *Astron. Nachrichten*) undertakes to repeat the despatch throughout Europe at the cost of the Kiel Observatory or of the Astronomische Gesellschaft. Prof. Foerster informs me that the Paris Observatory as well as the German ones accept the arrangement. At Greenwich I assured myself of its acceptance there.